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## DAMMED BOCA CHICA PASS.

### Interesting War Incident Which Occurred On This Coast.

How Colonel Hudnutt Filled the Pass and Crossed Over Supplies For Troops at Brownsville.

Did you ever hear how Colonel J. O. Hudson, of 6121 Ellis avenue, Chicago, dammed the Atlantic ocean with oyster shells?

It is a fascinating story and recalls a bit of hitherto unpublished war history. The Army of the Frontier, numbering 10,000 men, under the command of Major General Heron, was in 1864 located at Brownsville, Texas. The soldiers' supplies were landed at Brazos Island, then shipped in lighters to Point Isabel and then transported by mule train to Brownsville, thirty miles away.

It was a terrible journey, for in the rainy season the wheels were sunk deep in the sticky clay roads, and at other times the sun blistered and baked their ruts into jagged rocks. Fierce sandstorms raged, and, worst of all, there was no water, and at the end of a trip men and beasts were parched with thirst.

#### SANK IN THE MIRE.

Colonel Hudnutt was in command of the engineering corps and relieved the situation somewhat by building a ferry across the Vocherio Pass, which was about 1800 feet wide. The bed was a quagmire, so feared by the Mexicans that they could not be bribed to even approach the bank. One day in a spirit of bravado a quartermaster's clerk rode out into the treacherous water, and to the unspeakable horror of the onlookers both horse and rider were immediately engulfed.

The situation became so serious that General Heron notified General Banks at New Orleans that unless some other method for the transportation of supplies was devised it would be necessary to abandon Brownsville. General Banks immediately dispatched an engineer to Brazos Island, who, with much ceremony soon arrived with two schooners loaded with cars, engines, piling and all the necessary paraphernalia to build and equip a railroad.

#### A BOTTOMLESS PIT.

Before his arrival Colonel Hudnutt took soundings to verify the truth or falsity of the Mexican superstition that the Vocherio Pass was bottomless. A number of rods 45 feet long were sunk, but could not be withdrawn, as the suction was so strong that they shot from the rodman's hands like a bullet from a gun. In spite of Colonel Hudnutt's expostulations, General Banks' engineer jauntily ordered soundings with 16-foot rods and was furious when he saw them wrested from the hands of his men. He soon declared it was impossible to build a bridge across the Vocherio and ordered the return of the loaded schooners.

Colonel Hudnutt took the liberty of the countermanding this order, and that night rode to Brownsville to consult with General Heron, who inquired:

"Can a bridge be built?"

"Can't isn't in an engineer's dic-

tionary; it must be done," was the quiet reply.

Colonel Hudnutt was given carte blanche to study the situation thoroughly, and if the plan was feasible to proceed with the building of the bridge. He found that the water in the pass was four and a half feet deep at ordinary tide, the current rushing with tremendous velocity through the inlet between Brazos Island and the mainland. Fortunately he had made an exhaustive study of quicksand and he knew that if the water could be eliminated it would make a foundation firm as a rock.

His first act was to buy 75,000 feed sacks from the quartermaster and hire a force of Mexicans to fill them with oyster shells, which were heaped four or five feet high, as for general use the native tribes visited the coast to feast on the succulent bivalves.

#### THREW IN OYSTER SHELLS.

With a force of 2000 soldiers and an adequate number of teams the work was begun at each shore end and pushed with all possible speed. Piles were sunk and spiked together with cross ties to prevent spreading and these sections were filled with brush and sacks of oyster shells to the high water mark.

In a fortnight 1400 feet was completed and only 400 feet of water space remained in midstream. At each end of the dam Colonel Hudnutt had immense heaps of filled sacks and a forest of brush, and when the tide receded a regiment of men swarmed out at each shore and in a few hours Brazos Island was annexed to the mainland by a strip of land 900 feet wide and as hard as a macadamized road, over which a railroad was soon laid.

The work was completed about 8 o'clock in the evening and after the troops had shouted and sung themselves hoarse at their triumph over the mighty waters and had gone to their tents, Colonel Hudnutt placed a guard over the new road and retired. At 2 o'clock he dreamed that a heavy tide washed out the dam and that the piling, brush and bags were floating out to sea. He sprang from his bunk and without waiting to dress rushed to the road.

#### A SEA OF FIRE.

A big Irishman was on duty, and Colonel Hudnutt, supposing that the man was frightened by his ghostly appearance, quickly gave the countersign and inquired anxiously:

"Is everything all right?"

"Oh, begorrah, colonel, the dam is burning up over there."

The colonel hurried to the lagoon side which was four feet lower than the other, and found that at high tide the water had flowed over the unfinished roadbed, carrying a colony of sea animalcules, which were clinging to the piling, their brilliant phosphorescent light giving the appearance of 1500 feet of fire and flame, and the terrified son of Erin thought the dam was burning to the water's edge.

How did the government recognize Colonel Hudnutt's splendid engineering feat?

Oh, they landed him to the skies and made him a brigadier general by brevet, and when the scheme was brought to the attention of General Banks' engineer he scoffingly remarked:

"I have heard of the d—d fool who undertook to dam the Nile with bullrushes, but the d—d fool I ever heard of is the fool who is trying to dam the Atlantic Ocean with oyster shells."—Chicago Record Herald.